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CLEVELAND ABBE (1838–1916)

Fellow in Class II, Section 1, 1884.

To be known, for a quarter-century, as the dean of American meteorologists; to be recognized as the chief factor in bringing about the inauguration of our national system of weather forecasts; to be accepted as the mainstay of meteorology in the United States and as one of the world authorities in this science — these are no slight distinctions. They were accorded, and accorded ungrudgingly, to Cleveland Abbe, for nearly fifty years an active officer of our national weather service; a modest, careful scientific worker; a ready helper of all who came to him for advice and information; a veritable storehouse of meteorological facts; a devoted student who knew the literature of his science as few do, and as few have done. The death of Abbe, on Oct. 28, 1916, at the age of 77, has removed the last of the pioneers of the older school of American meteorologists. His work laid many of the foundations upon which our later progress has been built up.

Abbe early became a tremendous reader and his attention, even in boyhood, was directed toward the phenomena of the sky and of the air. His first work was astronomical. He studied at Ann Arbor (1858–60), and with Gould in Cambridge (1860–64). He was at the Pulkova Observatory, in Russia, for two years, under Struve; later at the United States Naval Observatory as aid, and in 1868 became director of the Cincinnati Observatory. Here his career as a meteorologist really began. On September 1, 1869, he there inaugurated a system of telegraphic daily weather reports and daily weather maps for the purposes of weather forecasting. Of this undertaking he wrote to his father: "I have started that which the country will not willingly let die." This pioneer venture was brought to the attention of the National Government, and on Feb. 4, 1870, Congress passed a joint resolution establishing a meteorological service under the jurisdiction of the Chief Signal Office of the Army.

On the invitation of Gen. A. J. Meyer, the Chief Signal Officer, Abbe entered the Government service in January, 1871, and was given charge of weather forecasting. For some time he did the lion's share of the work, and under him the early forecasters of the Signal Service were trained. For twenty years (1871–1891), Abbe was professor of meteorology and civilian assistant in the office of the Chief

Signal Officer and when, in 1891, the transfer of our Government meteorological work to the Department of Agriculture was accomplished, Abbe continued as professor of meteorology in the Weather Bureau. Through six changes of his administrative chiefs, until his resignation in August, 1916, Abbe kept on with his work, often under conditions which, to his sensitive nature, must have been trying in the extreme. Patient; uncomplaining; devoted to his studies, he continued faithfully at his post.

Abbe's remarkable knowledge of the literature of his science served him well in the preparation of his "Treatise on Meteorological Apparatus and Methods" (*Appendix 46, Annual Report of the Chief Signal Officer for 1887*), a practical and historical report of enduring value, and of "A First Report on the Relations between Climate and Crops" (*U. S. Weather Bureau, Bulletin 36*, 1905), as well as in his contributions to the "Bibliography of Meteorology" (*U. S. Signal Service*, 1891), a valuable but comparatively little known publication. The many duties of his position in Washington left Abbe little time for original investigation. As a partial substitute for such work on his part he brought before English and American readers an important, and indeed for working dynamical meteorologists an indispensable, collection of translations of important foreign memoirs ("Short Memoirs on Meteorological Subjects," first collection, *Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution for 1877;* "The Mechanics of the Atmosphere"; second collection, *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections*, 843, 1891; third collection, Vol. 51, No. 4, 1910). By the publication of his "*Report on Standard Time*" (1879), Abbe became one of the leading promoters of the introduction of standard time in the United States.

It is as the editor, for many years, of the *Monthly Weather Review*, that Abbe will doubtless be longest and best known. In that position, his extraordinary grasp of meteorological literature, and his remarkable memory, made him invaluable. Not only did he himself write a very large number of articles, but he made frequent and helpful comments on the contributions of others, which added greatly to the value of the *Review* and made it one of the leading meteorological Journals of the world. In his capacity as editor, Abbe carried on an enormous correspondence, a good deal of it written with his own hand. He was always ready generously to assist all who came to him for information or for advice. Of peculiar interest to him were all questions that concerned meteorological education. He was keenly alive to every opportunity to advance and to improve meteorological teaching in the United States, and never weary of emphasizing the importance of sound training for meteorologists along mathematical and physical lines. Abbe held two academic positions. He was professor of meteorology at Columbian (now George Washington) University from 1886 to 1909, and lecturer in meteorology at Johns Hopkins University from 1896 to 1914. As a part of his work for meteorological education may be mentioned further his activity in connection with the International Meteorological Congress at Chicago (1893), and his editorship of the "Bulletin of the Mount Weather Observatory" (1909–1913). Through his articles on Meteorology in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* he brought sound meteorological information to large numbers of general readers.

Abbe was a member of many scientific societies, both in the United States and abroad. He was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1884. Two distinguished honors were awarded him abroad. He received the degree of LL.D. from the University of Glasgow in 1896, and the Symons Gold Medal of the Royal Meteorological Society (London) in 1912. The president of the Society, in presenting this medal, said of Abbe that he "has contributed to instrumental, statistical, dynamical, and thermodynamical meteorology, and forecasting," and "has, moreover, played throughout the part not only of an active contributor but also of a leader who drew others into the battle and pointed out the paths along which attacks might be successful." In April, 1916, Abbe was awarded the Marcellus Hartley gold medal of the National Academy of Sciences for "eminence in the application of science to the public welfare, in consideration of his distinguished service in inaugurating systematic meteorological observations in the United States."

During his lifetime, Abbe's modesty and self-depreciation to a large extent kept him from occupying the position of scientific prominence to which his learning and his service to meteorology entitled him. Now that he is dead, his work for the science to which he so faithfully devoted himself for fifty years is seen to have been far more important than even those who knew him best ever realized. Abbe's devotion to his work was an inspiration. His enthusiasm was a stimulus to all who came in contact with him. His cheerfulness and his patience were an example which could not fail to encourage his associates and his colleagues, everywhere.

ROBERT DEC. WARD.